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How do changes in the Contractor Registration laws affect residential landlords?

Generally, residential landlords/property owners are exempt from the Contractor Registration laws (RCW 18.27) unless they are buying and fixing up properties with the intent to sell them.

Examples of exemptions:

1. A landlord owns a duplex and rents it out. The landlord does a variety of work on the property to keep it up, some of which might be characterized as "maintenance, repair, and alteration," and some which might not (replacing a broken faucet or installing a new bathroom vanity or painting). The work is sometimes done between tenants so that the property remains marketable. Must the landlord become a registered contractor? No.

2. An owner of three apartment buildings hires staff to do maintenance work such as painting, minor repairs, etc., on the buildings. Does the maintenance staff need to be registered contractors? No.

3. You buy a small apartment building and plan to hire a registered general contractor to convert the five units into ten units to rent or lease. Do you need to be a registered contractor? No.

4. You purchase residential property and remodel or make improvements and then rent or lease it out. Do you need to be a registered contractor? No.

5. A homeowner wants to fix up and rent out a house she has been living in for three years. Does she have to be a registered contractor? No.

6. A landlord evicts a tenant who damaged the rental property. This is the last straw for the landlord, who then decides to fix up and sell the property. Must he be a registered contractor? No, not if the property is a residential structure that he owned for more than 12 months. Exception: If the property is an apartment complex or other multi-unit structure and the landlord is going to fix up and sell the units as condominiums, then yes, contractor registration is required.